The Vision Beatific

JOHN D. WALSHE, S.J.

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THE VISION BEATIFIC

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THE VISION BEATIFIC

BY

REV. JOHN D. WALSHE, S.J.

With a frontispiece
by Dorothy Wallace

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DEDICATION

TO the memory of the sainted Padres, the fragrance of whose Christian virtue still lingers in the earthly paradise of Santa Clara Valley, this little poem is affectionately inscribed.

The Author

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A WORD OF INTRODUCTION

Many poets have tried to picture Heaven—many poets in many ages.

The Greek poets had their Elysian Fields in the Fortunate Isles, bordered by the river Lethe—a domain where the guiltless followed the heart's desire, in a realm of eternal springtime, eternal happiness and song. The evil-doers, in the thronged, wide-gated, somber Underworld, wandered as desolate shades, looking longingly back to earth, while they told again and again the stories of their lives of old.

Dante sees the evil in the Afterworld in graded circles of descent toward utter stagnation; and he sees the good in orderly circles of ascent toward God. He sees all sins as rising out of selfishness; and he pictures disorderly souls as suffering the inevitable reaction of their sins. The deed always returns upon the doer.

On the upward flight, Dante pictures all courageous souls as ascending out of selfishness toward Heaven, toward humility, toward the love and light that abide in God. We can never forget the great Dantean line:

In His will lies our peace.

Milton, in his *Paradise Lost*, pictures the glooms of Hell and the glories of Heaven. But his terrors and splendors are lacking in human interest, the thing that touches the common man.

As one latter-day venture into the Unseen we are glad to welcome *The Vision Beatific*, a poem by the Reverend John D. Walshe of California.

For a single blissful day, the beneficent guardian angel of this poet permits him to visit the Heaven of his long years of prayer—to note the adoring hierarchies of angels, to hear the seraphic choirs, to catch all that a mortal may of "the vehemence of ecstasy" in the presence of the supernal.

He finds the great saints of every age, finds his parents, his kindred, his friends, all living

> Where love is vocal and where feeling speaks.

He discovers Heaven to be a place where he finds the high designs of infinite wisdom unfolded, and our deepest desires satisfied.

When the Madonna gives him welcome, the poet cries out:

> What! Queen of Heaven! and dost thou gracious deign
> To raise me up and fold me to thy breast
> And give to me a Mother's welcome home!

When, within the Empyrean, hearing the divine harmonies, he exclaims:

All Eden throbs to music's pulsing tide.

This Vision breathes of love, and rises to its climax in the third canto:

O Love Divine, all other loves beyond,
Abyss no seraph's plummet e'er could sound,
Thou glowing sea whose tides are ever full!
Eons have passed, but not thy golden floods:
When time is o'er thy tides shall still roll on.
* * * * * * *
Yea, God is Love, All Love, Substantial Love.

This beautiful Vision will carry uplifting and comforting for many.

EDWIN MARKHAM.

Foreword

I APPRECIATE the honor of introducing this poem to the reader as keenly as I feel my inability to do justice in a few prefatory words, to the task with which it is associated. The subject is HEAVEN, man's destined home, unless through perseverance in sin and final impenitence he deliberately forfeits his inheritance. Than this subject there is nothing that should claim greater attention or arouse keener interest.

Those who claim that there is a middle course, that it is possible to seek for the good things of earth without neglecting those of Heaven, may not altogether be wrong, provided they seek *first* the Kingdom of Heaven. Indeed this is the only way "to garden the earth with the flowers of Paradise."

To arouse within the soul of the reader a desire for things greater than the paltry, pass-

ing goods of earth, and, incidentally, a determination to do what must be done in order to reach the blessedness with which goodness must inevitably be crowned, is the purpose of this sweet little poem of Father Walshe. The burden of the author's lofty message is this: "We are made for God, and nothing but God manifested in Vision Beatific can satisfy the yearnings of the soul."

When first I read the poem I thought that the Reverend Author delayed too long on what may be regarded as the Symbolism of Heaven, the weak endeavors of man to describe the indescribable, to visualize the invisible. But when I saw the trend of his thought, how from what appeals to the senses—palms of victory and paeans of praise, white robes and musical instruments—he passed to the essential beatitude of Heaven—the knowledge and love of God—I felt the ecstasy of it all and, in his own beautiful language, I longed

> Into the ocean depths of Light and Life
> To plunge and lose myself.

D. J. KAVANAGH, S.J.

THE VISION BEATIFIC

Prologue

S one, whom duty calls āwāy
From hearth and loving friends and all
That have entwined themselves about
A heart responsive to the touch
Of tender love, will try to gain
An insight to his destined home,
The Country whither he is called,
Its people and their mode of life,
Their aspirations and their toils,
Their joys, if joys perchance there be,
Their sorrows, if in darkness set
Their lot, like his, is one of woe;
So we, who onward journeying
Approach that land, the Pilgrim's goal,
Whence none is fated to return—
We, who must leave our home and friends,
Our hoarded wealth, our house of clay—
This body—frail and doomed to groan
Beneath the ever-growing load
Of sorrows, sadness, sickness, sin,

Should seek, betimes, with eager hearts,
For knowledge of our Fatherland
Beyond the tomb, beyond the skies,
Our haven, home, our Paradise!

O Paradise, mere thought of thee,
In sorrow's hour what solace sweet!
In toil and pain how heartening!
In weaknesses how full of strength!
With hope's bright bow it arches o'er
The clouds of yesterday that hung
In threatening blackness o'er our lives;
It lights our path against despair
That, dark as death and black as hell,
Would else engulf us in its depths.

O Paradise, to muse on thee
Ennobles life and gives it all
A meaning else unknown or lost!
Far more than agitated dust,
Far more than wandering dream is he
Who looks beyond the fantasies
Of life to blessedness to come.
The thought of Paradise uplifts
The soul to loftier, holier spheres
To hold communion with the Saints
And Angels in the Court of God
And makes us feel how truly spake

The great Apostle, as adown
He gazed, in vision rapt, to voice
The message which all men may read,
In characters made bold and large
Upon the crumbling walls of time:
"No lasting city have we here
But look for one that is to come."

The Vision Beatific

Canto First

Wherein I meet my Angel Guardian

I

O FOR a day the blue-arched dome above,
In God's own happy kingdom of the blest,
Where all is halcyon peace and rest and bliss;
And Jesus' glory the unfading light!
Home of the soul! City of God, whose walls
Are jasper; whose foundations garnished are
In topaz, sapphire and all precious stones;
Whose shining pavement is translucent gold;
Whose portals wide are all of glistening pearl.
With flowers ambrosial how thy gardens smile,
While dancing rills enlace the emerald meads
With silver bands, whose jeweled ripplets break
In magic music on the velvet banks.
Groves amaranthine where Archangels tread,
Enchanting arbors, bathed in lustrous light,

That echo songs of birds such as our earth
Has never heard. And oh! to taste the fruits
That bloom full luscious on the Tree of Life;
And drink the waters crystalline that flow
Without surcease, in shimmering cataracts,
From the bright throne of God and of the Lamb!

The Poet's wildest dreams of fields elysian,
The Vale of Cashmere, the Bandusian fount,
Evanish quite at fleeting glimpse of thee.
The soaring wings of Fancy palsied fall;
And human mind doth reel and faint away
When Paradise first opes upon the view.
An hour of Heaven is worth an age of pain.
To win it, earthly travail, sweat and tears
Were as a mole-hill to high Everest peak.
One rapturous moment would eclipse the joys
Of earth and all the spheres in one combined,
As stars are quenched by the resplendent sun.
For what is Heaven but bliss without alloy,
A boundless sea of beatific love!

II

"Oh! Angel dear, my God-appointed guide,
Canst not accord me this my rapt desire?—
Remove the veil that hides thy glorious face
And let me see at last, and free converse

With thee, thou closest comrade of my life
From infancy's first wail to parting sigh.
O beauteous Angel! Prince of Heaven's Court!
So wise, so mighty, loving, gentle, kind!
My strong defender 'gainst the evil one;
Sagacious counselor in hours of doubt;
My faithful guide and stay in faltering steps
O'er stony paths, with brier and thorn beset
And many a covert snare and pitfall dark!
When other friends I trusted coldly changed
And failed, like broken reeds or drifting ice,
Not e'en my sins and base forgetfulness
Could banish thee in coldness from my side.
Thou loyal friend, unchangeable, benign!
Thou more than Mother in thy tenderness!
What constant care and loving watchfulness?
At garish noon and darkling midnight hour,
Thou didst bestow upon thy wayward child!
Yea, let me see thee now, and clasp thee close,
And tell thee of my endless gratitude.
And oh! one favor add to all the rest—
One crowning boon to overtop them all—
List! List in pity to the life-long urge
That ceaseless burns within this breast of flame:
Take, take me Heavenward for a single day!"

Such was the craving in mine inmost soul;
So wholly was my being in its grasp

O'ermastering, I sudden felt myself
Transmuted to a being new and strange.
I felt beside, *beyond* my corporal self—
A spirit free, untrameled and unfleshed;
With qualities endued that Angels own
And disembodied Spirits glorified.

III

My Angel Guardian, hitherto unseen,
Now flashed himself upon my ravished view.
There, there he stood—his beauteous face revealed
And his majestic form. Soft rays of light
Enshrined him round. Benignly sweet he smiled.
My soul was inly thrilled to ecstasy.
The vibrant air seemed rife with ripplings sweet
Of silver chimes; albeit good sooth to tell
He uttered not a syllable or sound,
But mirrored clear the thought upon my mind,
As is the mode with beings spiritual.
Voiced humanly, the Angel's words were these:

"Night upon night I saw thee gaze, dear child,
Into the brightly studded firmament
With awe and wonder; while thy soul was wont
To melt in praise of Him who bade it shine.
I witnessed too the passion of thy urge
To wing thy flight past all those starry worlds—

Sweet stellar blossoms planted in the blue—
And bide awhile within the realms of bliss.

Intensity of yearning gives thee claim,
E'en as the yearning of the Magdalene
To find the body of the Crucified
Begot the blossom of fruition fair.
Come then, my child, and let me show to thee
Some marvels of Omnipotent design
Thick-strewn along the avenues to Heaven!
Such is the Will of Him who rules on high."

IV

My heart and soul aflame with grateful love,
I clasp the Angel's kindly proffered hand,
To guide me and support my feebleness;
All unafraid, beside my trusted guide,
On pinions of the soul's impelling will
I spring aloft into the blue serene.
Right on we speed; we cleave the azure deep,
Unruffled as the placid crystal lake
When traversed by a ray of silver light.

V

"How brightly shines the Lunar Sphere, dear
Guide!
It grows in loveliness as we advance:

It soft illumines half the earth beneath,
Mantling with gentle beams each hill and dale,
Each cliff and cape, each snow-capped sentinel
And cross-adorned spire, transforming streams
And lakes and seas to shimmering silver zones.
Their mantles broad the clouds spread o'er the
meads,
While checkered shadows 'neath the oak trees dance;
Then like wild harts they nimbly scale the sides
Of yon steep mountain range. Ah, me! how fair
God's lamp tonight! My heart is all athrob
With praise of Him who made that silvery orb
And hung it in the sky to light man's way!"

" 'Tis meet, dear child, thy spirit should be
stirred
By love's own transports, all instinct with praise
Of Him who bounteous made the Queen of Night,
And set her in the deep cerulean.
Yet but a drop of morning dew is this
On the great bosom of God's universe."

We sudden flee with speed, immeasurable
By finite means, and by our finite minds
Incomprehensible, to realms beyond
The influence of the sun. I backward look
Upon the little planets and our earth—
Like toys they seem, and like a toy the sun

Whose golden chariot guides their orbit true,
And reins them ever in their headlong course.

"Where are we now?" I ask my heavenly Guide;
"Amid the suns are we," my Angel smiles—
"A hundred times a hundred thousand suns,
That fling their radiance through the worlds unknown
To man, and in harmonic motion sing
His praise that made them, and His glory show."

Through sapphire seas uncharted, that disclose
To the astonished eye new stellar worlds
Of endless splendor and variety—
Bewildering marvels of His skill divine—
On, on and ever on our flight we wing.
And yet, 'tis but the setting of the gem,
The threshold of the King's eternal home.

Still on and on through space ethereal,
Right through the endless vast of His domain
To the extremest verge—if verge there be—
The outposts of creation standing wide;
Beyond whose shining walls and bastions
I gaze adown into the dark profound
Of *possible* existences, that wait
But the Creator's nod to be or live.

"Have I not guessed aright, dear Angel mine?"
"No!—Suffer not wild Fancy on the wing
To sweep thee into groundless fantasies.
Save in the Mind of the Omnipotent
The 'possibles' are nowhere to be found."

VI

Oft have I seen on buoyant wings outstretched
And motionless, an eagle brooding o'er
Some steep abyss. So hovered we a space
O'er nature's outmost rim and battlements,
Mid darkness dense and breathless silences.
A feeling strange of loneliness and loss
My spirit sudden holds in thraldom's grasp,
Into the primal nothingness, from whence
His Mercy called me, lapsing back am I?
In terror dire I seek my Angel's side.
He beams on me a heartening radiant smile;
Whereat I see new rays of gladsome light
Speed on to earth, Hope's rainbow to create
Amid the clouds in some despairing breast.

"Since thou hast scanned some of the handiwork
Of the Creator's Fingers, broadcast strown
O'er all the firmament, it is His Will—
His word benign—that I conduct thee hence
To His elysian palace and thy home.

Then wilt thou laud Him all the more for what,
Within the mansions blest, He hath prepared
For those who love Him true and serve Him well."

Struck dumb with sweet amaze, all words and thoughts
That might befit my gratitude escape.

Again I glance adown toward stars and suns.
My vision seeks the ball terrestrial—
Of God's creation 'tis the veriest speck.
Ah! why should human hearts entwine themselves,
And make so much ado about that speck—
Too oft, alas! to their own self-undoing.

VII

Hast ever felt a soul-bestirring thrill
While gazing on the loveliness of dawn?
Hast ever stood amazed, thy soul afire
To see prismatic flames in Polar skies
Setting the Northern dark ablaze with light?
That witching beauty all, though multiplied
Ten thousand-fold, were feeble glimmerings
Of misty light, to that which met my gaze—
Those rays of glory that escaped from Heaven
To form a halo round its gates of bliss.

Canto Second

Wherein I tread elysian fields and meet with God's elect

I

"THE Empyrean," quoth my Guide,—
"Behold!
Here reigns our God in manifested light,
Who dwells in power and presence everywhere."
At magic touch the regal gates swing wide
To welcome us within the portals blest.

With heart upleaping wild with ecstasy,
Clasping my Angel's hand, I venture in.
Oh! God, what peace untold! What blessed calm!
All utterance fails at what mine eyes behold.
Unbidden tears of joy in torrents flow,
And speechless gratitude o'erwhelms my soul.
A peal triumphant now ascends that shakes
The vaults of Heaven. "That peal," my Angel said,
"That burst of joy ascends whene'er a soul,
New-ransomed by the Lamb, doth enter biiss."

II

What floods of holy light—O Light Divine!—
Come streaming forth from the eternal Throne
Of Him, Light Uncreated, flooding all
Elysium with lustrous brilliancy.
O Blessed Light, whose lucent beams my soul
Enkindle into joy! Light crystal-pure,
Yet seeming tinged with ever-varying hues
That robe the blest in glory iridescent
While whelming them in holiest delight!

What throngs of splendor in that Light I view!
Unnumbered hosts of beings exquisite,
In circles within circles, tier on tier,
Extending far and wide, and ranged about
The hallowed Throne whereon the Infinite—
The Deity unveils to rapture's gaze.
Now prostrate they in adoration's hush,
Now thrilling Heaven's dome with tuneful praise;
While from ten thousand censers incense-clouds,
Upcircling, canopy the sacred Mount.

"Those beauteous beings, child, you now behold,
Comprise in Heaven the nine ANGELIC CHOIRS.
As Alp o'er Alp, see tow'ring 'bove the rest
The glorious MICHAEL, Prince of Heaven's Hosts,

Who vanquished the arch-rebel Lucifer
And thrust him from the heights into the pit.

In brilliance tow'ring, too, view GABRIEL
Who bore to Mary, Israel's peerless one,
The tidings of redemption unto all.
Nor less than these in splendor, RAPHAEL,
Tobias' faithful guide and stalwart shield;
Angelic bearer of the gift of sight.
These bright Archangels, all th' Angelic Choirs,
Rejoice to greet and welcome thee to Heaven."

III

How tell my joy of soul when I am led
In honor by my Guide through Choir on Choir,
A fondly greeting to receive from each!
O bliss to feel I'm loved, e'en as I love,
Most truly, ardently, fraternally!
To fraternize with Angels—what delight!—
The first fair blossoms of Omnipotence,
First rays divine of His own Loveliness,
First masterpieces of His plastic Hand!

IV

Again I look, and lo! what countless hosts
Of other beings bless my wondering sight!
What types of beauty rare, what endless charms,

In harmony with divers merits won!
My wonder witnessing, the Angel said:
"The SAINTS in glorious Hierarchies are they;
Their wanderings are o'er, the desert passed;
At home are they in their own Father's house,
Full basking in the Light Ineffable
And Beauty of His Countenance revealed,
And resting in the Bosom of their God."

Supernal *Beauty*, ravishing, divine!
O who shall tell of Thee? A little glance,
A flash—the human heart, as lightning-struck,
Were instant stilled. Alone the 'Light of Glory'
Can nerve the soul to bear that vehemence
Of ecstasy. Man's vaunted loveliness,
Does it deserve the name? At best it melts
Like snowflakes on the brook; while Thine,
O God,
Stands permanent as Thy eternal Throne.
Created things with blemishes are linked:
To Science's far-penetrating gaze
The Day King's brightness spots of murk reveals;
With all her peerless charms the Queen of Flowers
Fast-wedded is to most ungrateful thorns;
But ah! Thy loveliness is unalloyed,
Is all divine, and ages mar it not.

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How shadowy are all created charms!
But Thine, O Radiant Truth, thy charms are real—
Reality thy Beauty Increate!
Thy Beauty is thine own Substantial Self.

V

"Those radiant bands I see of beauteous souls
In glittering white, like Selmon's glittering snows—
Dear Angel, who are they?"—"These are the Choirs
Of VIRGINS blest. About the Lamb divine
How close they throng, like lilies that are bound
With golden band and made to seem as one."
"And who be these so singularly bright?"
"Yon Soul, so star-like, the Iberian maid,
TERESA, Mystic Doctor of the Church
And glory of Carmel. Undaunted child
Of high desire was she; her seraph soul
Was Love's own tabernacle all aglow—
Sweet blending of the eagle and the dove.
Beside Teresa stands SIENA'S MAID;
Of miracles a very wonder-worker,
A spring profound of knowledge Heaven-infused:
Of future happenings a wondrous seer,

Two Sovereign Pontiffs wisely guided she
In matters of high moment to the Church.
Nigh unto her you note a virgin fair
Who on blest Catherine's footsteps closely pressed—
The Sweet Peruvian ROSE, who brought at birth
Her Heaven-stamped name, since her bright countenance
A striking likeness bore unto a rose.
Loved Eire's treasured virgin-flower behold,
The bright and spotless LILY OF KILDARE!
Of heavenly predilection she from birth,
Most pure of heart and virginal in mind;
Her constant thirst was for the Fount of Life,
Her soul's aspirings for her Spouse divine."

Exultingly in chorus list their cry:
"O Soul! made stainless in the Blood of Christ,
Most ardent welcome do we tender thee!"

VI

"In little less of radiance than those
Another group, dear Guide, with joy I note."
"Yea, these the noble band of PENITENTS.
And she whose beauty far outshines them all—
The Queen of Penitents, the Star of Hope

Unto the fallen, groping in the gloom
Of fell despair—none other can she be
Than Christ's adoring lover, Magdalene."

The picture flashes lifelike on my thought
Of Simon's feast at Galilee, when she
The sinner, fleeing thither with her shame,
Hard by the Master kneeling, kissed his feet,
Washed them with tears and dried them with her
hair;
Then brake the alabaster box and poured
The costly spikenard on those sacred feet.
The Pharisee—self-righteous host forsooth—
Amazed that Jesus shrank not from her touch,
Was awe-struck as he heard the gentle Lord:
"Thy sins, O woman, are forgiven thee!
Thy faith hath made thee whole! Go thou in
peace!"

No brighter jewels can adorn thy crown,
Thrice happy Magdalene! than these thy tears.
O tears of penitence whose pearly flood,
Commingling with sweet Calvary's ruby tide,
Can render snowy-white the crimson soul!
Soft zephyr sighs that breathe along the chords—
The jarring chords of the rebellious soul—
Attuning them anew to melody
Celestial in the grateful ear of God!

VII

"These souls that glisten, constellation-like,
Yet seem the center of great groups of stars—
What bright immortals they?" "The FOUNDERS, child,
Of various Orders in the flock of Christ.
So parent-like, behold them circled round
Endearingly by all their grateful sons.
Conspicuous on brilliant thrones behold
Those Saints who wrought with fire of holy zeal
And burning love ineffable to free
Frail earthbound mortals from the gyves of sin:
Parent of life Monastic, BENEDICT,
Whose four and twenty Pontiffs ruled in Rome.
On parchments, proof against the moth of time,
With loving zeal his children did inscribe
The Sacred Text of God's eternal word:
'Gainst savage Goth and ruthless Vandal bands
In cloistered crypts they shrined the Book divine.

Lo! peerless BERNARD, Knight of Heaven's Queen,
Whose sword was never sheathed in justice' cause.
Admired of all who seek to serve the Lord
In all His needy members upon earth,
Beloved of dumb creation FRANCIS stands.
The Albigensian scourge, blest DOMINIC;

The Watchdog brave and faithful of the Lord,
Inflaming hearts with torch of love divine.
Elect of God, LOYOLA, battle-scarred
At Pampeluna's fort in country's cause,
Christ's armor donned within Manresa's cave
To battle with the very hosts of hell.
PRECEPTORS too are there whose children learned
To shape youth's plastic mind in Christian mold.
DE PAUL, the open-handed pitying friend
Of all the sore-distressed and destitute,
Whose noble daughters doth a grateful world
Acclaim 'The Angels of the Battlefield.' "

VIII

"And yonder splendent throng so lustrous fair
In royal purple, bearing victor's palms?"
"The army glorious and triumphant these,
Who generous shed their blood for Jesus' Name.
Among them eminent, the BAPTIST see!
The Desert-Trumpet of the great Messiah,
The bold and fiery Lash of regal vice.
How wielded he the thunders of high Heaven
To bring 'the brood of vipers' to repent,
Who else had surely felt 'the wrath to come.'

See STEPHEN! proto-martyr of the cause,
Felled 'neath the blows of fiends in human guise
While prayed he Heaven's forgiveness for their
crime.

And him who smiling, on the gridiron lay
(For Christ's dear sake) as 'twere a rosy bed—
The youthful LAWRENCE, who could jest at death.
Note PLUNKETT, too, of soul as valorous
Whom Eire, martyr-nation, proudly claims;
Him, too, of Gaul, the AREOPAGITE—
The noble veteran of a hundred years,
Whose spirit great, Domitian's cruel thongs
Nor all his tortures dire, could e'er subdue.
CECILIA, Music's heavenly patroness;
And AGNES, sweetly brave though but a child;
Famed CATHERINE, glorious Alexandrian maid,
Of high aspiring, stout of heart and mind,
Who, vanquishing the proud philosophers,
As willing captives led them unto Christ;
And BONIFACE, that gladly gave his life
For the conversion of a mighty race.
Staunch MORE, the Chancellor, and CAMPION
Observe; while near them BECKET shines;
And lion-hearted JOAN, the warrior-maid.
With loud acclaim, hark! how they welcome thee
As fellow-citizen of Heaven's elect."

IX

Heroes and heroines of every clime!
The purest, choicest, rarest flowers of earth—
Hail, glorious victors, laurel-crowned, all hail!
No withered bays enwreath your noble brows,

Nor need have ye of gilded monuments
And brazen epitaphs to trump your fame.

Ye honored are of God who kens the heart,
And crowned before the whole celestial Court
With diadems of fadeless radiance.
E'en as the diamond, flashing in the sun,
Absorbs his rays, and in the dark of night
Like to another sun irradiates;
So ye, O glorified! drink in the beams
Of Justice' Sun and radiate like gods.

X

"These yonder, Angel, prithee who are they?
As stars of the first magnitude they shine,
Or 'brightness of the firmament?'" "These are
The FATHERS and the DOCTORS of the Church—
Pillars of learning, sanctity and zeal:
AUGUSTINE, AMBROSE, BASIL and JEROME,
AQUINAS the Angelic, CHRYSOSTOM—
Names hallowed that shall ever ring adown
Fame's brightest corridors in golden peals."

XI

"But loftier than all of these I note
Another band, bedecked in princely mode
Bespeaking office high, which once they held
In Jesus' shepherd-kingdom upon earth:
The APOSTLES, are they not, dear Angel mine?"

"Yea, truly so, and PETER at their head
With fit pre-eminence—great Proto-Pontiff,
Apostolic Prince and Kingly Claviger.
Beside him shines the quondam ruthless wolf
Of Jesus' infant fold; but felled to earth
By Jesus' voice, Saul, instant changed to PAUL,
Arose 'a Vessel of Election' bright
Whose rays the mists of error would dispel
In Gentile lands, and Israel's path illume.
Ranked glorious with the Apostolic band
Are XAVIER who evangeled Eastern lands;
And CLAVER, tender father to the slaves
In Carthagena's mart like cattle sold;
Blest VINCENT FERRER, famed of word and work,
Whose tireless toil brought countless multitudes
Into the Fold, and peace to warring realms;
And EIRE'S LOVED APOSTLE, world-renowned,
Who welded Erin so to Peter's rock
No power on earth or hell can loose the bond:
With many more of many tribes and tongues.
The myriad souls surrounding them comprise
The golden garnering of their God-like zeal.
With hearty greeting, lo! they welcome thee!"

XII

Observe I now, with hallowed glow bedight
Befiitting their exalted rank, as near
Akin to the great King Himself, Saints ANNE

And JOACHIM, through whose most ardent sighs
Was granted, in life's eve, th' Aurora fair—
Mary Immaculate—to usher in
The Sun of Justice, our sweet Savior-Babe.
In glory's radiant light with them I see
The Virgin-Mother's virgin-consort JOSEPH—
Great Foster-father to th' Incarnate Word.
Angelic ward of Israel's fair flower
And his Redeemer blest. By Heaven's decree
The 'Just Man's' hand did guide the tender steps
Of Mary's Child, while faithful shielding both
From every adverse wind and shade of harm—
Earth's trinity reflecting the divine!
From these to have this greeting—what a bliss!
"Come, ransomed soul! Come, blessed one! and share
Our glory in the Kingdom of our God!"

XIII

Then spake my Guide: "Remember, child, that all
Of God's elect, both men and angels bright—
Howbeit as star from star diversified
In glory's just degrees—compose but one
Great family of brethren true and fond.
Together all are bound in links of love
That forgéd are, and jointly interlocked

Within the furnace-glow of love intense
In the great Heart of God's Paternity."

Society thrice happy beyond dreams!
Sweet fellowship of men and angels blest!
What! counted I among your shining ranks?
And have I share in all your social joys?
Oh! if in yon sad vale of woe and tears
The sweet companionship of the refined
And nobly good, brings happiness untold;
What is't to see and freely to commune
With all God's chosen friends in Paradise!

XIV

Whence these familiar figures that approach—
All smiles, all joy, all love? Oh! God, they are
My cherished PARENTS, KINDRED, COMRADES,
FRIENDS!
To part with them on earth was anguish keen
That well-nigh snapped the life-chords of the heart
Whose pulsing throbbed in unison with theirs.

What tender, inexpressible delight!
To see them, greet them, grasp their hands once
more!
O hour of purest bliss that well o'erpays
The pangs of separation! Now restored

The raptures of love's welcoming embrace,
While soul enfoldeth soul—how lovingly!
Reunion longed-for, and forever blest!
And this in Paradise—where youth ne'er fades,
Where beauty's beaming eye doth ne'er grow dim,
And Death, his leaden scepter never wields;
Where Love is vocal and where Feeling speaks;
Where heart responds to heart in golden tones
Of soulful melody—as harp to harp
Echoes in sympathetic symphony.

Must not this joy all prior joys encrown?
In Heaven itself can aught remain to add
A new delight?—The meadow dewdrop this
To seas of bliss that still await the soul.

Canto Third

Wherein my yearning soul is blest with bliss supreme

I

TO her 'of womankind the noblest boast,
The Mother, Daughter, Spouse of the Most High,'
The VIRGIN-MOTHER of the Savior-God,
My Angel Guardian now conducts my steps—
To her, the masterpiece and sovereign crown
Of all creation wide—if we except
The Man-God's sacrosanct Humanity.
Resplendent Mirror of God's sanctity,
Encompassed round with glory like the sun,
The fairness of the moon beneath her feet,
And on her brow the diadem of stars;
Outshining saintly and Angelic Choirs,
And shedding beams of joy on each and all!
"O Mother mine!" I cry in ecstasy,
"Bequeathed as such to me on Golgotha!

How have I longed and pined thee to behold
In all thy regal state adorned and crowned,
Incomparably beautiful, O Queen!
Celestial Queen of Angels and of men,
Sole Empress of this mighty universe—
Enthroned suchwise by the Omnipotent
What day He bade His Angel cohorts bear
Thee, O Immaculate, with canticle
And festal song to thy right royal Court!
And now, O rapture! I behold thy face;
Thy more than seraph loveliness behold.
My soul is dazzled with thy Majesty;
I cast myself before thy glorious throne—
What! Queen of Heaven! and dost thou gracious
deign
To raise me up and fold me to thy breast,
And give to me a Mother's welcome home!"

"Beloved child, thou'rt welcome to my arms
And to my kingdom, ransomed as thou art
By my dear Son on Calvary's red hill.
Into the fulness of my joy and bliss
Enter for aye, for what is mine is thine.

And now, dear Guide, conduct this favored soul
Unto the King of Kings, my Son divine,
Who with the Father and the Spirit reigns
Through endless ages co-substantially."

II

Lo! as she spoke, straightway enwraps me round
A wondrous blaze of light—as freighted with
A shower of golden flakes—that seems to come
From His resplendent Throne. Awe-struck I stand.
Steals o'er my Mother's face divine a smile
That tells my timorous soul there's naught to fear.
Then clinging to my Guide, I venture forth
To meet my glorious King, EMMANUEL.

If human beauty's feeble, passing rays
Can weave around the heart a magic spell—
If glimpse in vision of His beauteous Hand
Could raise Teresa into ecstasy—
What mind conceive, what tongue shall tell the bliss
Upon His Majesty Supreme to gaze
Amid the splendors of His Heavenly Court?
Ah! this a seraph's tongue could not portray:
Adoring silence then must hymn His praise.

III

Mute can I stay when rapt with feeling's tide?
"O Savior-God! behold thy ransomed slave!
O Sacred Wounds, that shine like glittering gems!

Sweet proofs of love that pledge me endless joy!
I fling me down at Thy dear wounded feet
And kiss them o'er and o'er adoringly
With burning love and gratitude profound."
As molten silver, liquid in the flame,
My soul afire is fused to ecstasy
When fondly clasped to His spear-riven Heart,
And bade to sit beside Him on His throne.
"Thrice welcome home at last, beloved child!
Well hast thou fought the fight, and won the
crown."

And as He speaks, He places on my brow
A glorious diadem, and in my hand
The palm of victory. Then once again
He gently folds me to His loving Breast.
O blessed moment, of all moments blest!
When resting tranquil on the Savior's Heart
Like Love's disciple in the Cenacle!
O toil! O pain! O all ye earthly woes!
Though ne'er so long and dire—what are ye now
I pray? Naught save a treasured memory
That adds a joy to my o'erbrimming cup.

Mid acclamations of the Heavenly Court
Am I—e'en I—with crown and palm adorned,
Triumphantly by my loved Angel led
To where a throne of glory stands prepared;

My name thereon with Love's own hand engraved
In golden characters of living light.
Dream of my golden dreams! Can this be true?

"But list, dear Guide! Though raptured here
I stand
At vision of the beauty of my King—
What of his Godhead, his Divinity?"
"The 'Light of Glory,' child, will soon be yours,
To elevate and strengthen you to bear
The dazzling splendors of Divinity."

IV

But hark to MUSIC'S swell! to organ, harp,
To psaltery and dulcimer and lute—
Yea, countless instruments of heavenly art—
That sweet outbreathe the very soul of song,
Evoked in tones of gold by Angel hands.
My soul respondent thrills with melody;
'Tis borne aloft on Music's golden wings;
It gushes forth, untaught, in harmony;
It joins the voices of the raptured blest
That blend divine with the Angelic Choirs,
Making full rife with hymn the ambrosial air.
The jasper walls and domes of gold awake,
Grow vibrant, and fling back the melody.
Heaven rings with jubilee, as, peal on peal,

Through pillared aisles hosannas loud resound!
All Eden throbs to Music's pulsing tide—
A swelling sea in sooth of psalmody.
It is as all creation—Angels, men,
Earth, Heaven, and all the spheres—had joined
In one majestic symphony of praise
And jubilation, to the Triune God—
Creation's concert in her Maker's praise!

V

How great, how passing great these raptures new
That onward came, like to so many rills
Dashing from mountain-tops, to seize upon
The favored soul and whelm it with delight!
And yet, not sated *wholly* is the thirst
Devouring it, like a consuming fire,
For union most complete with God, its Love.

Like a consuming fire! "Where then," I asked
"Is the contentment of beatitude;
Contented intellect in Truth possessed,
Contented will in the embrace of all
That it has sought as Good and Beautiful?
The more I see and hear, O Angel Guide,
The greater grows the longing of my soul;
And surely longing has no place in Heaven."

At this my Mentor smiled, as one well pleased,
And answered gracious, but with words of flame:
"Well hast thou reasoned, favored child, and deep
Hast thou experienced this longing for
A Something that will satisfy the Soul,
And fill its ceaseless crave with blissful rest.
The wealth of Heaven in part thine eye hath
seen—
Yet gates of pearl and floors of trodden gold,
The music thou hast heard from Angel choirs,
The very Angels in their glory crowned,
The Saints triumphant, nay our Heaven's Queen,
Are impotent to satiate the Soul:
For Him who made it, is the Spirit made;
In Him alone eternal rest it finds—
Eternal rest, beatitude complete."

VI

Adown Niagara's sides less headlong leaps
The swirling, foaming cataract, than flies
The emancipated spirit unto Him—
Its being's Source and all-ennobling End.

A flood of wonder-light!—The Light of Glory!
O God! My very God! My Sovereign Lord,
To Thee I fly! Thee, face to face at last
I see in Thy divine Sublimity!

On all Thy myriad Sovereign Attributes—
Thy goodness, wisdom, beauty, truth itself—
With eye undazzled and unseared I feast;
And feasting thus, what truths I comprehend!

O sacred *truth!* too rare where rank abound
The earthly weeds of falsehood, vain pretense,
Hypocrisy! But here thou reign'st, unstrained
And undiluted, in thy plenitude!
My thirsting mind is now inebriate
With a torrential flood of living truth.

VII

Within a chamber vast of treasured tomes—
The garnered wisdom of ten thousand years—
A scientist, for learning keen athirst,
While sipping honey-drops with eager zest
From some rare tract, eftsoons was heard exclaim:
"Oh! would that all this learning round about
Enshrined in vellum, shelf on shelf, were mine!"

That ardent wish, increased a million-fold,
In me is now fulfilled—Strew broadcast all
The books of mortal science till from view
They hide the face of Earth's broad amplitude;
My knowledge now would far outstrip it all.

VIII

The glorified intelligence beholds,
Writ on the scroll begun at dawn of time,
The truthful HISTORY of every race
That ever flourished on the face of earth—
Each nation's blossoming so fair; its growth
So radiant; its noontide vigor; then
Decadence, ending all in gloomy death.
Like a sequoia from a seedling sprung
That slowly thriving, lifts into the sky
His lofty head, outstretching lordly arms,
And, standing forth the monarch of the grove,
Rejoices in the glory of his might,
As if immortal and impregnable—
Till lo! the woodman's axe, or storm-king's wrath—
And prone in lowly dust the giant lies.

IX

Hast ever quaffed of the Pierian spring?
By man in wisdom's quest it ne'er was sipped,
Since 'twas but fiction of the Muse. But here,
In viewing face to face the Omniscient God,
I drink from Source Divine in deepest draughts
Knowledge and lore and truth intuitive—

'The whole domain of sciences profound.'
As some rare drawing, traced invisibly,
When held before a flame will spring to light;
Thus nature's riddles and life's mysteries,
Which so perplexed philosophers of earth—
All burst upon my wondering gaze, revealed
In the effulgence of the glowing sight
Of the All-knowing God who shaped the worlds.

X

Bright mirrored in the calm unfathomed deep
Of His eternal self-existing Essence
I calmly contemplate the ways, erstwhile
Obscure, of PROVIDENCE, which reason's ray
But dimly did illume. I clearly grasp
The skill wherewith in Wisdom's loom He weaved,
From tiny threads of everyday events,
The 'wildering web of all my chequered years.
Still wove He merciful the web anew,
My erring steps conducting at the last
To home and Father in the Promised Land.

XI

Yet loftier far than these, and more sublime,
The abysmal transcendental mysteries:
The One in Three and Three in One—to wit,

The TRIUNE GOD who, countless aeons through,
Was self-existing in beatitude;
The HYPOSTATIC nuptial bond in CHRIST
Of natures dual, human and divine,
Subsisting in the one Eternal Word;
The Sacrificial mystery of love,
The Man-God's LIFE-ATONEMENT to the Father,
Whereby humanity might be uplift—
If so it would—from out its fallen state
E'en to the mansions bright beyond the skies—
These mysteries divine unfolded are
To my enraptured gaze; e'en as a book
Unsealed, whose pictured page its story tells.

The great DESIGNS besides are now unveiled
Of Wisdom Infinite who builded *so*
The double universe or twofold world—
The Spirit-kingdom, the material realm—
With all their myriad beings, qualities,
Relations sweetly intermutual—
As to effect a grand harmonious whole.

XII

Immense the joy to revel thus in lore,
As in all other God-imparted gifts;
Yet not in gifts, though gifts were piled to Heaven,
As fabled Pelion on Ossa's mount,

But in the DEITY HIMSELF is centered
The Soul's absorbing, all-consuming love.

Mother, how thrills your heart of hearts, when eyes
New flushed with light and life look into yours!
How thrills your heart when tender infant hands
Outstretched demand the tribute of a fond
Embrace with all the soul of love aglow!
You know the meaning of the holiest love
That earth has power to give; and yet that love
Is but a shadow dim and from afar
Of love celestial, such as reigns above.

XIII

O fire, delightful fire of *Love Divine!*
Maternal love how sweet! But oh! to love
And to be loved by Love Himself in Person—
And this without a fear of end or change!
O Love Divine, all other loves beyond!
Abyss no seraph's plummet e'er could sound!
Thou glowing sea whose tides are ever full!
Aeons have passed, but not thy golden floods;
When time is o'er thy tides shall still roll on.

Unchain the Fancy; send it forth to roam;
Through the expanse of God's wide universe

On lightning pinions let it wing its flight.
The heights and depths enjoin it to explore;
Suffer no nook to go unvisited.
Where, prithee, shall this Fancy find a love
So strong, so wondrous, ardent, fathomless
As God's eternal love for sons of men?

Beneficent, all-conquering is His love;
Else why a Bethlehem? A Golgotha?
And why the Banquet of the Cenacle?
Ah! 'tis to reach and conquer human hearts
And lead them, joyous captives, to His realm—
Resplendent trophies of Almighty Love!
When Love's Apostle, from the topmost peak
Of inspiration's mount, sang "God is Love"
He voiced the Soul of God's Beneficence—
The starting point and goal of all God's works.
Yea, God is Love, All Love, Substantial Love!

Then oh! the perfect transport of delight,
When Love Eternal opes His Bosom wide—
Like ocean's mighty arms outstretched—to clasp
In fond embrace the timorous pilgrim soul,
And welcome it to its Eternal Home!
Immersed am I in the Divinity:
Into the ocean depths of Light and Life
I plunge and lose myself—Yea, lose myself—
Yet more than ever find myself my own.

"O Father mine! O God! Though unimpaired
Is my identity, I feel—I know,
In very sooth, that I am deified!"

XIV

United thus essentially to Him
Who is Essential Love, my life is love;
And love, my life in all reality.
That cycles moments seem, wakes no surprise;
For now the vastness of my spirit's void,
And crave for bliss is sated to the full.
My peace is the unruffled, placid lake;
My joy the shoreless and unfathomed deep!

Epilogue

BUT cease, my feeble Muse; nor longer seek
To reach the heights of this supernal theme.
Pray, tell me: Can an infant comprehend
The fire that burns in the poetic breast?
Can he, of sight devoid from birth, drink in
The fairy beauty of the carmine rose—
The witching splendors of the orient sun?
As well might we essay to grasp and limn
The joys and glories of the Heavenly Land.

If he of Tarsus, who to Heaven was rapt—
If John the Seer of Patmos' prison isle
Ne'er rested eagle-plume till he had reached
The very Essence of the Deity
Enthroned upon the Mount Divine, and basked
Unscorched, unscathed in God's own splendor's blaze—
If these, with souls aflame and tongues afire,

Failed utterly, as stricken dumb, to tell
What things ineffable had smote their sight—
Shall tongue like mine the infinite essay?

To ponder this, howbeit, were wisdom's part:
If Heaven were only what we have portrayed
Who, to possess it, would not do and dare?
Who would not dash through tempest, flood and fire;
And eager all the Martyrs' woes endure?

O Happy Land, whose roses know no thorns;
Whose bowers no fickle larkspur e'er disclose.
Thrice blessed Salem! Eden of delights!
E'en as the parchéd roe for cooling spring,
The soul—Oh! how it throbs and yearns for thee!
On swiftly-soaring pinions of desire
It eager flies to feast on all thy charms.
O Heaven! O soul-entrancing Paradise!
Thou realm of rest, beyond the shoals of time!
Thou land of Life! Our own eternal Home!

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